

## The Americanization of John Ronald Seeley

Edgar Z. FRIEDENBERG  
Dalhousie University

The editors of *Who's Who in America* have recently been soliciting from the eminent persons included in the work a brief statement of "Thoughts on My Life." John Ronald Seeley contributed the following statement to the 38th, or 1974-75 edition:

"I have tried to understand. I have tried to understand in order to change. I have had to change in order to understand. It has been very rewarding—and very costly. Pain and joy have been nicely proportioned and inextricably intertwined. That is the nature of life. The life-task is to say 'yes'—and then live it." (Volume II, p. 2765.)

This statement serves almost perfectly to establish perspective on John Seeley's contribution to social thought. No one who knows him at all well could doubt its accuracy, its sincerity, or its relevance to the vision Seeley has maintained throughout his career. Yet, in the mid 1970's, one would appreciate it with fewer reservations had it come from the pen of, say, Xaviera Hollander, to whose life it would surely have been equally apposite, and who would have realized that it was funny.

Although Seeley is best known for his work as senior author of *Crestwood Heights* which, after twenty years, remains the most penetrating study ever made of the life and values and, especially, the education, of a suburban community, I have chosen to base this essay primarily on his book of collected essays, *The Americanization of the Unconscious*, for several reasons. Published in 1967, it is his most recent book; and the only one, except for a manual for military manpower classification published during World War II, of which he is the sole author. In some ways it has dated. Seeley, one of the founding fathers of York University, did his best work while a Canadian resident; and one need only ask oneself what a Canadian reader today would expect a book called *The Americanization of the Unconscious* to be about to see how times have changed. But it is still a landmark in the exploration of social psychology: exquisite in detail and in its synthesis of empirical generalization with essential moral insight—a quality often sedulously avoided by social scientists fearful of being stigmatized as subjective. And it is no less useful as a landmark for being, in some curious respects, pointed the wrong way; though one must remember this in consulting it.

In TAMOTU, as I shall hereafter call the book for the sake of brevity, Seeley seems to me to avoid the trap of subjectivity altogether. His moral judgments are clear, cogent, and basically tough. But he does not avoid the trap of sentimentality. One reads TAMOTU today with a shock of recognition; the incipient horrors of the intrusive psychological welfare state are recognized and condemned for what they are. But the man is gentle and trusting in his warnings; his approach to the world is suffused with that basic trust whose establishment, early on in life, Erik Erikson deems the fundamental basis for authentic human growth. As such, it is doubtless its own reward for those lucky enough to retain their faith in mankind. But trust is a treacherous trait to the social scientist; for it always involves an empirical proposition as well as an ethical attitude; and the proposition may be wrong.

In TAMOTU, Seeley often expresses his trust in the untrustworthy in the course of a masterful piece of social analysis which fully demonstrates that he knows better. This is especially evident in his discussion of the schools. It is disconcerting to read, in a well-considered essay on "The Future of Psychiatry," that "surgery-doing and pill-giving are not education, even if (which God forbid) the teacher does them; they merely establish conditions favorable to the pursuit of it." Seeley is not, of course, discussing the use of drugs to control the behavior of allegedly hyperkinetic children in the classroom—an abuse that, so far as I know, had not yet begun when this passage was written; and the prospect was clearly abhorrent to him. But he did not face the prospect that God, indeed, would not forbid it and that teachers would soon be eagerly giving pills, which would not establish conditions favorable to the pursuit of education, except insofar as they served to reduce her own tensions rather than those of the children to whom they were administered.

Similarly, and more explicitly, in a paper called "The Facts of Life: A Plea for Their Place in the School," which is an eloquent plea for a more honest curriculum, Seeley asserts, rhapsodically: "For a generation or two of teachers to have carried the school so far—from a Puritan prison to a humane home—is not just magnificent it is magnanimous, heroic." No, not heroic, fantastic, in view of the routines that prevailed then as now in schools for lower-status children especially; in view of what *Crestwood Heights* had revealed of

the school's practise of isolating pupils who were angered by its routines in a "quiet" room until they were feeling less hostile, never acknowledging that the pupil might have something to be angry about; in view of the fact that, as even a protagonist of public education like Charles Silberman was about to conclude after many months of tedious observation, schools are generally joyless places. Yet, in the heart of this same article on "The Facts of Life: A Plea for Their Place in School," Seeley states, as the crux of what it is about:

"The facts that are suppressed are, by and large, now even more than then, the key 'facts of life': the facts about the nature of human nature, the facts about the nature of society in general and the state of ours in particular: the facts about power, wealth, the state of ethics and philosophy in our age, the facts about themselves, even *the facts about the school and the educational enterprise.*" (emphasis added.)

What is one to make of this? Is it simply evidence of a need to say likeable things to a present audience, in order to win its approval? Hardly; for the central message is true, and threatening. When it comes to the point, Seeley does not mince words. He is no courtier, but rather the contrary, a perceptive psychotherapist, tactfully but firmly letting the patient know that though his ruses have been detected, the therapist's faith in his basic goodness and capacity for growth remains intact. But this is inappropriate if the people you are dealing with are not patients and especially, if they take a certain pride in their own badness which, whatever its origins, is the way they are now. It is inappropriate if, as members of a group bound by professional norms and political commitments, they are pretty clearly going to go on being what they are and doing what they do, once your speech is over. Though one might wish to meet the occasion with composure, to call one's executioner "friend" is to insult rather than to flatter him. As a dignified and potent officer, he has a right to be taken seriously.

Seeley's practice of approaching his audiences by sweetening his insights with affirmations of faith becomes at times a discomfiting stratagem, as in this otherwise moving and very precisely stated passage from his essay "Guidance and the Youth Culture:"

"I do not know with what justification, but justly or unjustly—guidance people have a definition in the youth culture as emissaries of the adult culture more dangerous even than parents and teachers, veritable Greeks bearing gifts, of whom it is wise to beware. They are the ones, the kids say, who want to weaken you by defining resistance to assimilation as *your* psychological problem instead of *their* social one. They, the guidance people, are the ones, the youngsters say, who want to

rehabilitate authority and adult practice in the eyes of youth by methods doubly dangerous because they are so insidious, because they come gentle and loving in the guise of 'helping you,' hiding their dedication to 'saving them.'

I am horrified and distressed. I hope the young are unjust, and that guidance people have only to make it clear. I trust everywhere guidance people and such do think of themselves as a counterbureaucracy, a counteradministration, the Lenins in behalf of the young amid the Czarist regime of the old, the agents, attorneys, and agitators of and for youth, enjoining it only to find itself in its very proper battle, warning it against its all-too-present temptation to find comfort in compromise, in terms that promise what is most destructive: a peace without honor, and a plenty without sense.

I hope that this is so, not simply because thus my sympathies incline, but because otherwise I believe there is no chance of your guiding youth. And even if there were a chance, there would quite certainly be no warrant."

A noble and prophetic statement to have published in 1962. Yet, even then, how could he—how *dared* he—"trust that everywhere guidance people . . . think of themselves as a counterbureaucracy . . . in behalf of the young," when he knew damned well that they usually do no such thing and that it was idle to hope, that in this matter, "the young are unjust." Indeed, the statement is worded as an indictment of practices Seeley abhors and which he correctly notes, in his final sentence, vitiate the legitimacy of the guidance function when they occur. Why, if he was horrified and distressed at the charges he says the kids level at guidance people, did he reject the responsibility of bearing witness, from his own experience of nearly twenty years in the mental health movement (even at that date), as to whether, and in what degree, those charges are merited?

Even more curiously, how could the adversaries of such a man, in attempting as recently as 1975 to block his return from the United States to a major faculty post in a Canadian educational institution, have made use of prevalent "suggestions that his views and personality are too iconoclastic and abrasive to be suitable for" such a post? (see Myers, 1975). Far from being iconoclastic, Seeley handles icons with the care of a curator of antiquities, and a degree of old-world courtesy that sometimes becomes wearisome by its excess, as the quoted excerpts indicate. His treatment of them does, however, reveal them to be icons which, to men of a rigidly secular bent, must seem as destructive as breaking them. Still, re-reading TAMOTU after eight years, it does come as a shock to recall that even by the time it was published, John Seeley—a man so genteel that he quotes the youths who were clients of the University of Chicago Settlement House in the stockyards district when he worked there early in the 1940's as using phrases like "dose mudder-jumpers"—was indeed regarded as a

trenchant and implacable social critic and something of a shitdisturber.

And so he was. And so he is. What, then, has changed?

Not John Seely, I think—despite his affirmation in “Who’s Who”—so much as the times. To their effect on what one notices about TAMOTU I can attest from unimpeachable evidence; for I reviewed it in *The New York Review of Books* (1967) shortly after it was published. I praised it highly then as, for its substance, I would today. And I was not at all annoyed then by what now seems to me its excessive—its almost irresponsible—gentility. I never even noticed it till I re-read the book so that I might write this essay. We were all more polite in academic discourse then than we are today, though not, I think, less hostile—we just acted more like stage Orientals adhering to ceremonial forms.

Many of the papers in TAMOTU—and all those I have quoted so far—were published during the Kennedy administration when a peculiar, and in retrospect rather shameful, naïveté prevailed with respect to the benign intent and potential goodness of American policy. This was easily and customarily generalized into optimism about the possibility of meliorist intervention everywhere: social, psychological, military. And the intruders invariably thought of themselves as men of good will and sound judgment. Small wonder that what was notable about John Seeley’s writings was the fact that he continued to sound warnings that those intentions and that good will might easily go awry and have evil, though unintended consequences; at a time when so many others were entranced by sleek visions of Camelot. If Seeley also occasionally offered authority a courteous tribute, he did so only as an expression of what he himself thought suitable to civilized discourse. His colleagues, by and large, were doing far worse: actively engaging in authority’s dirty work and entering each occasion proudly in their *vita*. This was the time, remember, of the infamous Project Camelot: the United States’ earlier invasion of Chile by cadres of social scientists amassing data for use in counterinsurgency which, if successful, would have aborted the rise of Dr. Allende. *This* is the political background, against which John Seeley’s polite but invariably precise and embarrassingly relevant critiques stood out so boldly.

The position of authority in North America has declined precipitately since the papers in TAMOTU were published; and Seeley, too, may well have grown more skeptical of it, though he has published too little since for me to be certain. Nevertheless, the whole corpus of his work and his career line do suggest a real and persistent need to believe that a just society and social institutions designed to benefit all mankind are possible in principle and may somewhere be found in practice. This is not a proposition that

is subject to positive disproof; but the burden of the evidence I think, lies against it. Whether Seeley would now agree with me, I do not know, but I doubt it. In any case, he seems to have spent his life in quest of institutional decency; and, certainly, in efforts to promote it. This has taken him, like Moses, to some very high places, with panoramic views. But there is always one more river to cross. And it isn’t, in either direction, the St. Lawrence; though, on balance, I find the blue-eyed Arabs of the north more tolerable than the hard-nosed empiricists of the south.

The entry in *Who’s Who in America* to which I have referred is interesting and revealing though, like most autobiographical statements, it raises at least as many questions as it answers. It is the longest statement I have located by thumbing through the volume: 60 lines, exclusive of the philosophical excerpt previously quoted. This compares to 4½ lines for Pierre Elliot Trudeau and 33 even for Talcott Parsons, who is also a bit on the long side but a good sigma closer to the mean than Seeley. Neither man offers any thoughts on his life, a new feature few biographers have yet adopted. Despite its length, the entry gives no information whatever about the first 27 years of Seeley’s life. He was born in London in 1913, and came to the United States in 1940, whether directly from England or from Canada is not stated. At any rate, he obtained an A.B. with honors from the University of Chicago in 1942, but after the United States entered World War II, served in the *Canadian Army*, from 1942-45.

Seeley then returned to the University of Chicago for a year of graduate work in sociology—there is no mention of any further academic degree—and served for a year as Field Research Director of the Ohio Mental Health Study at Ohio State University. His professional interest in the mental health movement thus dates from 1946 at latest. He then returned to Canada, serving as Executive Officer of the Canadian Mental Health Association from 1947-48. He served on the faculty of the University of Toronto in sociology and psychiatry from 1948-59; but during that time was also for three years, 1953-56, director of a corporation doing community surveys in Indianapolis. When York University was founded in 1959, Seeley accepted an appointment there as professor of sociology, becoming chairman of the department and Assistant to the President of the University in 1962. He is widely associated with plans to develop York along more humanistic lines which yielded to demands for mass higher education in booming, sprawling Metropolitan Toronto. In 1963, he returned to the United States, becoming first a visiting professor then, in 1964, Klutznick Professor of Sociology at Brandeis University, which named him department chairman in 1965.

In 1966, he left Brandeis to accept the post

which marks the formal apogee of his career so far, in comparison to which even a Klutznick Professor seems insignificant: that of Dean and Program Director of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, California, serving directly under the magisterial Robert Hutchins at one of the most respected think-tanks in the United States, then at the height of its vitality. By 1969, however, Hutchins had begun to feel that the Center had too many Permanent Fellows whom he regarded as insufficiently productive. A scheme was devised to reduce their ranks to a certain fixed number by having Hutchins select a colleague to be retained, the two of them select a third, the three of them a fourth and so on until the number was reached. It has been reported that Seeley, who admired and trusted Hutchins, proposed this device; certainly, as Dean, its execution fell within his office. Its effect, in any case, was to remove him, the late Bishop Pike, and the distinguished labor economist William H. Ferry, among others, from their Fellowships, which had been regarded until then as the equivalent of tenured posts at a university of highest rank. If the now defunct Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions improved itself by this action, the improvement has been hard to discern. One may say of democratic institutions, as of much else, that you have to be one to know one.

Since that time, Seeley has remained in California, associating himself concurrently and consecutively with a number of largely experimental institutions: challenging, but hazardous, and providing more opportunities to say "yes" than a prudent man could reasonably require. This has been a truly extraordinary career, replete with honour and hazard, the latter perhaps more diligently sought than the former.

Can a pattern be discerned in it that would teach us something worth knowing about what it means to be a gentleman and a scholar in times like ours? It seems to me that it can, and that the key to it lies in the changing nature of the mental health movement itself and what it may have meant to a man of formidable intellect and profound moral commitment to build his life on it as a foundation. TAMOTU is an excellent source from which to approach this task.

The earliest papers included in the work, "The Shaping of Human Nature" and "Hostility in Modern Society," were both published in 1950. And both deal with the difficulties imposed by a discordant, disjunctive, and rapidly changing society on the development of a firm sense of personal and social identity. As early as this, a serious conflict troubles Seeley's social thought. His image of society coincides almost precisely with that of William Butler Yeats in the first stanza of "The Second Coming." But Seeley's political temperament, of course, is the opposite of Yeats': he is a progressive social technician,

though perhaps a cultural conservative. And the conflict surfaces in an odd little curtsey toward authority at its worst in "Hostility in Modern Society."

"A society that expresses—wherever, in little islands it is still coherent—one set of values in its primary institutions and a radically different set in all others, cannot expect that its members will be tolerably free of frustration and hostility. Such a society must expect, and will surely have, frequent and cataclysmic mass explosions wherever and whenever a person can be found who can mobilize and canalize the latent mass hostilities for whatever ends he deems worthwhile.

And the answer does not lie in the direction of executing enough war criminals, or, at least, not in that alone. We must address ourselves to other questions than the wickedness or psychopathology of this or that individual. The gravest danger is that we shall in our sense of insecurity take measures that in the long run will increase sevenfold the hostilities that we now have."

"Not in that alone!" As if executing war criminals were not just such a measure; as if the notoriously idealistic British do-gooder Winston Churchill had not observed that "Grass grows over the battlefield; but over the scaffold, never!" The phrase thrusts itself out of the benign text like Dr. Strangelove's infamous secular arm. Again, times have surely changed; if you want to see how much with your own eyes, dig out of the archives of the National Film Board its early postwar propaganda film in praise of hanging war criminals called *Guilty Men!*—as ugly a record of the violence underlying Canadian moral smugness as could ever have been devised. I do not, of course, infer from this passage that Seeley favored these executions; but he did make it clear that he accepted them, raising the point himself in a discussion in which it need not have been introduced.

For Seeley, at this time, the resolution of this conflict lay in improving the techniques and resources available to mental hygiene. In 1950, everyone I can think of would have agreed with him; though R. D. Laing, his hour about to come round, had already begun to slouch. The next papers included in TAMOTU, "Education for Mental Health: An Experiment," "The Forest Hill Village 'Human Relations Classes,'" and "A Controlled Experiment" though published from 1951-54, do not really predate the two I have just mentioned. All three deal with the Forest Hill Village Project, which Seeley directed from 1948-53 and which provided the data for *Crestwood Heights*. These papers recount in detail an early, and model, attempt to establish a set of prophylactic mental health resources in the schools of this Toronto Suburb, involving the use of clinical and pedagogical teams in what we would now call an open classroom setting for a part of the school day. Seeley is apparently quite well satisfied with the results of "the" pioneer effort at "the" pre-

clinical intervention; the tone of the reports is not smug, but they definitely sound like progress reports, and reflect none of the doubts and ambiguities Seeley was to discuss a decade later in a much more substantial paper, "Crestwood Heights: a Transaction," which is also included in TAMOTU. Intervention by experts, on behalf of an authority whose benign intent was accepted, worked, or seemed to, on this experimental scale; and held great promise, a generation ago.

In the last of the TAMOTU articles published in the 1950's, "Education: What for?" Seeley makes the basic conservatism of his position absolutely explicit.

"In our eagerness to throw out the totalitarian bath, there is every danger that we also toss out the democratic baby or, at least, the conditions for its survival, if one may mix a metaphor. It is necessary to the very notion of democracy, strange as it may sound, that everybody (or nearly everybody) think alike—in a limited number of vital respects. The emphasis must fall with about equal weight on two words: 'limited and vital.' As we move away from the demand or expectation that persons must agree in only a limited number of ways, we move toward a blatant dictatorship of power or toward a more subtle dictatorship of a conformist mass society. As we move away from the vital—we could say vigorous, committed, dedicated—support for these few overarching universal agreements, democracy ceases to survive because its undoubted strains are not compensated by perceived and deeply felt rewards."

So far, there is nothing conservative about this statement, which approximates a classic liberal position; especially as Seeley goes on to observe that "The spirit of democracy is manifest, from the side of the person, in its capacity to sustain, nurture, and value (not tolerate!) him in all his particularity. The genius of democracy, from the outsider's, or public, viewpoint, lies in its capacity to prosper the more its citizens are individualized, differentiated, and encouraged in the development and free expression of that which makes each a person, unique, irreplaceable, something quite other than an entry in somebody's "table of organization" or an item on someone's "list of personnel."

That isn't conservative; and at the time it was published, in 1958, it was not even apparent that—if applied to the conditions of life in any putatively democratic state—it is bullshit, though the bull be noble. Dwight David Eisenhower evidently believed democracy might be powerful enough to produce such results; it was just about this time that, as President of the United States and Commander-in-Chief, he was forbidding the people of Vietnam to hold the elections that had been promised, which he feared might indeed lead to the unification of the country. What made Seeley's statement conservative was the clincher with which the essay ends:

"If the school does its share of the educational task, that should be sufficient and challenge enough for any institution! That share cannot be distinguished in a book or a short chapter, let alone a sentence. But we shall be pointing in the right direction if we say that the school is most notably the custodian of the reality system—as against, say, the wish system—the mediator to the child of those realities and that realism that may in due time enable him to become what he and we now dream of his becoming.

This, I think, is our task."

Seeley might, understandably, have thought this, if he had never observed what schools actually do to children, and if he had never professed any commitment to psychoanalytic thought, which is utterly corrupted by supposing the "reality system" to have become the property of any social institution. Every social institution has its own political agenda—the school especially—and sets the ego the task of freeing itself from the authorized version of reality that it purveys. Seeley was later to acknowledge this, partially, in his "The Facts of Life: a Plea for Their Place in the School." It is idle, however, to plea for honesty from the school, as from the Exxon corporation, if by honesty you mean a candid exposition of how it operates in society. One need not rebel against the school—a lot of individual factors go into *that* decision—but one can only use it to promote one's growth by treating its pretensions as social phenomena to be dealt with rather than as norms to be accepted as a basis for social unity.

What has happened is that, in his approach to society which seems innocent of any systematic thought about politics. Seeley has trapped himself in something like the familiar "good cop-bad cop" routine with which the minions of the law educe acceptance of being busted, and often confessions, from those they arrest. Seeley is the good cop; and the institutions he represents are aggressive and potentially destructive forces against which he apparently struggles on their victim's behalf. But a serious difficulty arises because Seeley believes, or believed, this routine himself; thinks—or thought—that his mediation might indeed make these institutions less oppressive, and exhorts them to reform—or, at least, to greater compassion. I suspect that this, often repeated, is the source of these allegations of "iconoclasm" and "abrasive" personality. For, of course, it is extremely irritating to the "bad cop"—and ultimately to the whole police state—for the "good cop" to act as if they, too, had the capacity and the obligation to behave decently and compassionately. If they do, the whole routine breaks down; and as good Machiavellians they know that it is more urgent that the Prince be feared than loved. And no man has a Prince for a friend. No, man;—though the Prince may find it possible to negotiate with a man with the

resources and temerity to look him in the eye and say "Quit that, mother-fucker!" "Mudder-jumper," however, will not do.

*The Americanization of the Unconscious* really begins as a coherent work with the papers published during the 1960's. By this time, John Seeley's intellectual task had become clear. The tensions and pretensions that were turning American liberal democratic society into a death-trap, at least for the Indochinese and the young, would become increasingly apparent and, by the time the book was published, would have made critical inroads into the academic system that had provided Seeley with the supports, however treacherous, on which his life had been built. Seeley's writings of the sixties take increasing account of the darker side of liberal democracy. This, really, is what the book is about. The title essay, which is also the first in the book, was published in *The Atlantic* in 1961; and it gives a fair and still engrossing statement of the approach by which Seeley—slowly and, I think, with much grief—comes to grips with the formidable ills of North American society. By the time he wrote the last paper in TAMOTU, an address on "Adolescence: The Management of Emancipation in History and Life History" delivered at a plenary session of the International Congress for Child Psychiatry in Edinburgh in August, 1966, he could note that "liberal" . . . is now very nearly a swearword, at least among later adolescents" because of what Seeley sees as the liberal obtuseness about "the nationally celebrated struggles at the University of California in Berkeley in the 1965 academic year." His sympathy is already with the young men and women of what was then called the Free Speech Movement; and he was to become more deeply committed to them and their struggle as the months passed and evil changes in the California political climate corroded his life as theirs had been corroded and linked him ever more closely to the young with the bonds of experience. The Edinburgh address hardly adumbrates these developments—there is no hint in it that he could then have seen that the failure of the "liberals" to understand what was happening was evidence not of "generation-grap" but of false consciousness: ideologically induced stupidity of the crassest kind. The address, however, was a good deal better than it reads, and it reads well, even now. I was present when it was delivered; one can only say that it was very evident—the unconscious, Americanized or not, being what it is—that John Seeley knew and cared about a lot more than he could, or would, put into words.

The title essay is mannered and detached, compared to the Edinburgh paper. But it raises the issues that were to lead Seeley's social thought past the point of no return from his haven of social trust. And like all Seeley's best work, it is highly perceptive; it is a real pleasure to read, in an article fifteen years old, that "Some roman-

ticize, or, as in Canada, pursue frantically a national identity which eludes perception because it is pursued." But Canada is incidental to this paper. It is about "the ploys of the game that delights Americans—if anything at all is to be said of the modern world over which in one sense, she hovers, and which, in another sense, she transforms."

That passage has dated, all right. I wonder how it would sound in Arabic—a language said to be well suited to rhetoric. But it has dated only because it was so true when Seeley wrote it that, by now, America appears to have done about all the hovering and transforming it can afford. In the next sentence, Seeley identifies this delightful game: "The very title of this chapter points to something distinctly, if not exclusively, American: the intellectual centralization of self-analysis as a collective and personal preoccupation, the pouring into it of vast libidinal investment and the receipt in turn of endless emotional gratification. The love affair between America and its image is unlike any under the moon or sun. Every other nation holds before itself for relatively lengthy periods a rather steady image of itself, clear-eyed or distorted . . . only in America does one turn and turn the corporate image before all the available transforming images of this frame of reference and that." If Narcissus had been American, it seems, he would have seen himself as if he were Picasso or even Braque.

But Americans are also, of course, devotees of technical mastery; there are, or were, no tragedies, only problems. Mental health, then, becomes an industry: indeed, a consortium of industries. The ideas of Sigmund Freud, which Freud perceived as the bases of a therapeutic and a metaphysical system, become software to be deployed in the pursuit of happiness. In the process, Freud's fundamental insistence that repression is the price of civilization becomes a difficulty to be eliminated by new techniques. Few of the executives of the mental health industry, whether in its clinical, pedagogical, industrial or rehabilitative divisions, perceived that this approach was comparable to an engineer trying to develop machinery to which the laws of thermodynamics would not apply—a futile enterprise and one which betrays a serious misunderstanding of the relationship between pure and applied science.

In Seeley's view, this is both a dangerous and a promising development: "We are confronted by the possibility—perhaps now the inescapable necessity—of a highly self-conscious society of highly self-conscious individuals. . . . We have added a dimension; and there is no more radical act . . . Such a society has the possibility of approximating a "therapeutic community"—or, rather, a community favorable to the emergence of a humanity more humane than any we have known. It has also the possibility of becoming a

'manipulative society' . . . a society in which, moreover, the threats of manipulation from without are countered but fatally and compounded by self-manipulation, which is also full in the current American stream. The dice are heavily loaded in favor of the latter risk, the risk of catastrophe, by the American devotion to mastery as *Deus deorum*. . . . Insight is mere technique: Eros and Thanatos still dispute whose, and their representatives in us will determine."

So, in the Americanized Unconscious, the possibilities of evil are at last clearly stated and even given the more favorable odds; though Seeley's eulogistic tone belies his argument. America is not, however, a psychologically bilingual land. Eros rules only in *la belle province*; the rest, including most of the industry and finance, is located in Thanatos' several provinces. I don't think Freud, properly understood, gives grounds for hope that Eros will win; in fact, it seems to me that Seeley has just said that. And I know Norman O. Brown does not. As James Heldon—a humble but knowing junior-high school teacher and deceptively simple writer observes in *How to Survive in Your Native Land*, in a section dealing with the public school's rationalizations for replacing a program of one-to-one teaching of reading with a multi-million dollar program developed and installed by the authorities in Sacramento for the costliest and most elaborate school system in the world:

"You cannot use then instruments of war, repression and death to promote work, knowledge and love. Fakery is fakery. Work is work. Love is love. Small animals are small animals. Dead men are dead men. None of them can be turned into anything else. I agree it is hard lines" (1971: 167).

The subsequently written papers included in TAMOTU address themselves to the probability that the "helping professions" will increasingly ameliorate the lot of mankind, and to the difficulties that make this less likely. Seeley's tone is generally optimistic but admonitory. His optimism is based on a well-founded faith that self-awareness is revolutionary in itself; and this, it seems to me, has largely been borne out by events. Once they become aware of new possibilities inherent in themselves and their social situation, people do develop sharply rising expectations, and some of these expectations are moral. A major factor in the attrition of American participation in the Indochina war has indeed been the spread of knowledge about what, in fact, Americans were doing there among the American people. Oppression of persons within the commonwealth on ethnic or racial grounds, or psychosexual ones, has become more difficult with the spread of social science knowledge "even as that knowledge" has served to make it more feasible technically. For the time at least, the U.S. Army has been reduced to doing to blackbirds

what it used to do to Indochinese villages, though it has yet to direct its technological proficiency against victims of lighter hue.

In these respects, matters have been working out much as Seeley expected and would have wished. In these papers, moreover, he has noted scrupulously and in detail the social dynamics that were likely to make intervention into people's lives either less humane or, if humane, less effective. Two papers that seem to me to stand up especially well are "Social Science: Some Probative Problems" and "The Problem of Social Problems," published in 1963 and 1965 respectively, which address issues in the sociology of knowledge later to become much more prominent in the sociology of deviance and in what has come to be called "radical sociology" generally. I especially value this passage from the first of these two papers:

"With every success [in attacking a recognized social problem empirically] . . . the likelihood that a subsequent item might be successfully examined is reduced. . . . So the problem of where to cut into a social problem, what other things to take as being equal, is in effect an act of intervention tending to insure that they remain not only equal but unchanged. . . . Which means that the problem as set is within a complex net of assumptions and goals, the *ceteris paribus*, that in effect constitutes an invitation to join the conservative party. So the way to deal with alcoholism is likelier to be found by science to be the setting up of more clinics where the socially hurt can be reconciled to their fate and persuaded to find substitute comforts, than it is to be the elimination of the sources of anxiety, aggression, self-denial and self-castration that appear (to me) to underlie all or most self-defeating self-indulgence. Even when we shift away from the study of *problems*, defined as such, the study of persons, or small groups—again, all other things being equal is the very pre-condition of the study—we flee, I believe, in motive, as well as in effect, from the larger questions, just as we divert resources, and, worse, attention from these much more far-reaching matters. American sociology and psychology go that way, I believe, not on the mere ground of scientific safety or ease of management of the problem, but from covert alliances with the going order, in its major aspects, already in the heart of the scientist."

In a previously unpublished lecture delivered in 1962 and hence written at about the same time as this quotation, "Society, Social Pathology, and Mental Ills," Seeley is more concrete:

"(In one of the several slum studies I did *on behalf* of a university that was worried about the places of prostitution, and worse, that the slum had brought to its door, my partner and I found after a great deal of labor that the same university, through its business office, owned a great deal of the property in question and, by restrictive covenants made with its neighbors against Negroes, had driven the properties into the still more profitable uses of prostitutes and paid pervers to prey upon their pupils.) But, as I say, all this is respectable."

A just observation, indeed. Yet it falls short of the essential recognition that the preying prostitutes and paid pervers mentioned in this curiously alliterative passage are also human and perhaps as respectable as the university and its personnel, who, in any case, exhibit no concern about the development of places of prostitution, asexual in character, within the university itself.

Even today, one can hardly fault or greatly extend the scope of the analysis TAMOTU provides of the basic dynamics of the social sciences in their social role. The book remains exemplary in the growing field of sociology of social science; and one of the best things about it is Seeley's steady awareness of the unique difficulties created for the science which not only alters what is observed by the act of observation—all observation, Heisenberg tells us, does that—but which is always a part of its own data-system; for society is irreversibly changed, as people are, by self-awareness. But I do think, in retrospect at least, that Seeley wagered too much on the probability that insight would come to serve as the stuff of therapy, for society as it sometimes does for people. It does tend to, and Seeley is right to hold that self-knowledge is a necessary condition for growth, social or human. And he never maintains that it is a sufficient condition.

But the question that remains unanswered when the book is closed, is the familiar and portentous one: *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* One leaves TAMOTU, moreover, with the uncomfortable feeling that one reason Seeley has not raised it is that he feels that *he* does; that this is just what the book is doing. So it is, up to a

point; but meanwhile we have become aware that the guardians were getting away with genocide right while he was watching and warning us that this *might* happen, but in terms so elegant and courtly as to belie the possibility. The relationship between social institutions and those on whom they bear has entered a new and harsher phase in which the role of the social scientist as mediator is no longer accepted—for reasons explicit in Seeley's text. The pathology so exquisitely delineated there has simply proved more serious than he—or most of us—believed even a few years ago; and the mental health movement has been too thoroughly implicated in the problem, as a source of increasingly prevalent administrative coercion, to be treated as part of the solution rather than of the problem. TAMOTU is a landmark; but what it marks is the International Date Line. If this is basic trust in society and its leadership, it must be yesterday.

## REFERENCES

- Friedenberg, E. Z. 1967. "Review of John Seeley, *The Americanization of the Unconscious*," *The New York Review of Books* 9 (Sept. 28): 28-30.
- Herndon, J. 1971. *How to Survive in Your Native Land*. N.Y.: Simon and Schuster.
- Myers, D. 1975. "OISE and John Seeley," *Canadian Forum* 54 (March): 3.